

Movie mogul's giant Oz plans

AMERICAN-ITALIAN blockbuster film-maker Dino De Laurentiis is negotiating to build a huge film complex on the Gold Coast hinterland in Queensland.

He is planning to build a lot big enough to make five to 10 movies a year, using Australian talent.

According to *Variety*, the weekly American showbusiness bible and TV WEEK sources in New York, talks are being held at the highest level with the Queensland government.

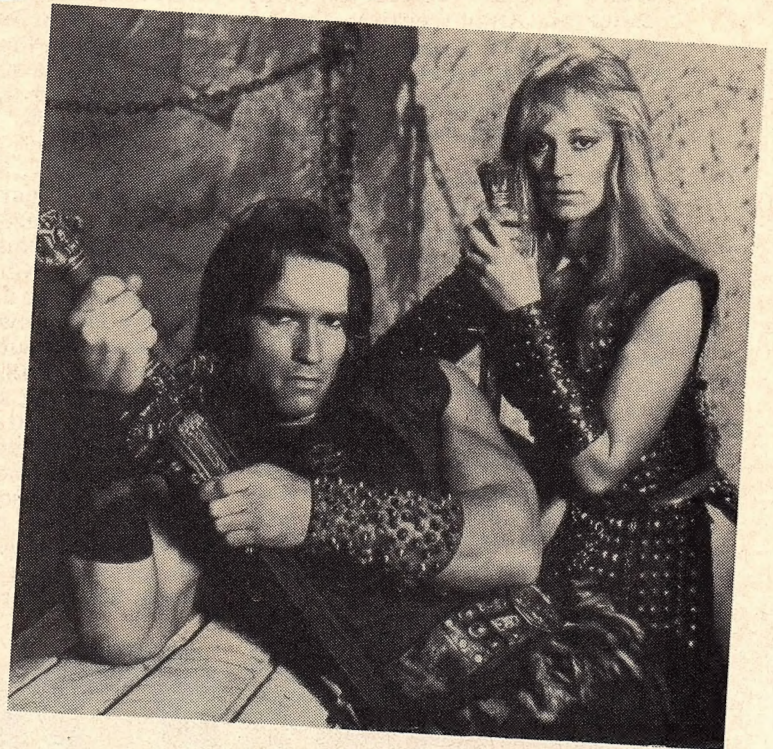
It is understood that De Laurentiis has been told by the Queensland government that it is prepared to subsidise the studios and production facility for the first five

years of its operation.

Once the deal is finalised, construction is expected to start immediately, and the studio will open for business in about eight months.

De Laurentiis will fund the development of the lot — eventually expected to rival his mammoth North American operation which has seven sound stages at Wilmington in North Carolina — with some of the \$30 million he expects to raise by setting up De Laurentiis Entertainments Limited, an Australian public company.

Currently, De Laurentiis is making three major blockbusters for re-



ABOVE: Arnold Schwarzenegger in *Conan The Barbarian*.

LEFT: Another De Laurentiis epic the 1976 remake of *King Kong*, starring Jessica Lange.



lease next year. They are *Taipan*, from a James Clavell novel and starring Aussie Bryan Brown, *King Kong Lives* and *Crimes Of The Heart*, starring Sissy Spacek.

The decision to throw his lot in with Queensland is a major snub for New South Wales whose premier, Barry Unsworth, courted De Laurentiis during his short Australian visit in August.

New York sources say that Unsworth made everything as easy as possible for De Laurentiis to locate the studio complex in New South Wales.

Film entrepreneur Terry Jackman, a driving force behind De Laurentiis setting up in Australia, was showing the international producer potential sites west of Sydney when the Queensland Government heard what was going on.

I understand that Jackman, who used to run the Hoyts group, was prevailed upon to bring De Laurentiis to Queensland.

De Laurentiis flew by Learjet, flew by helicopter over areas where a studio could be located, and was impressed.

Winner of two Oscars and largely responsible for rebuilding the Italian film industry after World War II, De Laurentiis has made about 500 films. They include *Conan The Barbarian*, *Serpico*, *Death Wish* and the remake of *King Kong* with Jessica Lange.

When he was in Australia, De Laurentiis said the country offered ideal film locations and a wealth of young talent.

● Meanwhile, Sydney developer Denis Thompson, aiming to attract offshore production, is converting a Melbourne site into a \$10 million studio complex that he says will be comparable to any in the world. *Christopher Beck*